Employee Pension Scheme, as well as Public Provident Fund subscribers to greatly benefit from increased returns through professional fund management and prudently liberalised investment guidelines. This report is being examined by the Ministry of Finance and in the meantime second and final report of project OASIS os being finalised.

(iv) On the request of MOS to Union Law Minister, Chief Justice of India and Chief Justices of all the High Courts in the country, instructions have been issued by the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India to all Chief Justices of High Courts for expeditious disposed of cases incolving older persons 60 years and above.

(v) On the request of this Ministry, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare have issued instructions to all State Governments to ensure provision of separate queues for older persons in hospitals at every stage and the other request of the Ministry for inclusion of geriatrics in the medical curricula of the country is under their consideration.

(vi) At the initiative of this Ministry, a Telephone Helpline has been started by an NGO called Age Well with the financial assistance from this Ministry.

(vii) A Secretariat for NCOP which would also process and take follow-up action on the representations/complaints/grievances of older persons has been established by Age Well Foundation on the initiative and with the financial assistance of this Ministry.

(viii) Ministry of Telecommunications has announced grant of telephone connections to older persons on priority basis.

(ix) Ministry of Rural Development is considering launching of a new scheme called ANNAPURNA under which free foodgrains upto 10 Kgs are to be provided to older persons

Re-scheduling of Various Ethnic Groups as STs in Assam

601. SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether there was a recommendation by the Select Committee of Parliament that Koch Rajbonshis, Chutia, Moran, Muttodh, Tai,

Ahom, Tea ethmic groups of Assam be rescheduled as Scheduled Tribes; and

(b) if so, by when Government would finalise the rescheduling of above said ethnic groups as STs and amend the Constitution?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) Yes, Sir.
[Koch-Rajhonshis and Muttodh have been spelled as KOCH-RAJ-BONGSHI and MATAK by the Government of Assam]

(b) Process of revision of lists of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is on. However, no time frame can be given.

Old Age Pension to Persons from Backward Classes in Assam

602. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the number of persons provided with old age pension in Assam during the last three years i.e. 1997-98, 1998-99 and so far in 1999-2000 alongwith the details thereof;

(b) the number of persons from Backward Classes provided with old age pension by Government during the same period; and

(c) the frequency of distribution of old age pension and the amount dispersed, so far, separately during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) As reported by the Government of Assam number of persons provided with old age pension in Assam are 45,853, 1,00,136 and 47,710 during the years 1997-98, 1998-99 and 1999-2000 (upto 2.12.1999) respectively. The details are given in the Annexure. [*See Appendix 188, Annexure No. 21*].

(b) No separate data is being maintained for Backward Classes.

(c) As per guidelines on National Social Assistance Programme, the benefit under National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS) is to be disbursed, in not less than two instalments in a year and if possible, the benefit is disbursed in more instalments as per directions of the State Government. With regard to amounts disbursed so far,